

Crossbow FAQs

Who can hunt with a crossbow?

Anyone who is 12-years-old or older and has obtained a crossbow stamp can hunt with a crossbow during any season when a firearm is allowed, for big game or small game. In addition, anyone who is 50 years older may use a crossbow during the Oct. 1 – Nov. 14 archery deer season, with an archery license. And in Zone 3 (southern Michigan), anyone 12 and older can hunt with a crossbow during any hunting season as long as they have the appropriate licenses. Meanwhile, anyone who has obtained a crossbow permit because of a permanent disability can continue to use a crossbow.

Why is there total inclusion in just southern Michigan?

The Natural Resources Commission decided that the large deer population and the preponderance of private land in southern Michigan made it the best place to allow the widespread use of crossbows for evaluation while minimizing conflicts among hunters and without putting the resource at risk.

Why can't I use a crossbow in the northern part of the state during the late archery deer season?

The NRC thought that the large migration of deer gathering in wintering yards might be subject deer to over-harvest if crossbows are widely adopted by hunters.

Why do I need a crossbow stamp?

The requirement of a crossbow stamp, which will be available free of charge beginning March 15 from all license vendors, is designed to help the Department of Natural Resources build a data base to conduct surveys. The surveys will help determine whether crossbows are effective in helping recruit new hunters, retain older hunters, and whether they increase the harvest rates of deer. Results of the surveys will help wildlife officials determine whether the use of crossbows should be further expanded or restricted. Hunters already hunting under a DNR-issued crossbow permit will not need to get a crossbow stamp.

Why can't 10- and 11-year-olds use crossbows?

The NRC thought that there might be potential safety issues involving very young hunters using crossbows, which, unlike conventional archery gear, are pre-cocked and loaded. The DNR is optimistic that hunter safety education programs will incorporate crossbows into the curriculum.

Are there any restrictions on crossbows?

Yes, hunters are limited to crossbows that shoot bolts at no more than 350 feet per second.

Is it true that deer hunters must wear hunter orange when using a crossbow?

Yes. State law is very specific that hunters must wear hunter orange unless they are hunting wild turkeys, waterfowl or with a bow and arrow. Crossbows do not meet the definition of “bow and arrow” in the current state law. The DNR will seek some modification of state law on this issue.

Why are these regulations valid for just three years?

The Natural Resources Commission passed these expanded crossbow regulations on a trial basis. They have directed the DNR to evaluate the use of crossbows on hunter recruitment, retention and effectiveness.